

Minutes of the Dornsife Faculty Council Meeting (September 6, 2017)

Date: September 6, 2017

Room: Irani Hall, Rm 321

Present (17): Brian Bernardis; Iva Bozovic; Rebecca Broyer; Jessica Cantiello; Robert Chernoff; David Crombecque; Gioia Polidori; Shannon Gibson; Assal Habibi; Michael Hadjidaniel; Antonio Idini (*secretary*); P.T. McNiff; Dan Pecchenino (*vice-president*); Geraldine Peters; Carolina Sitnisky-Cole; Trisha Tucker (*president*); An-Min Wu

Absent (2): Sergio Sanudo-Wilhelmy; Emily Zeamer

Arrival and Introductions

- Brief introduction by each DFC member (name and department).
- Trisha introduces the new member An-Min Wu who will replace Matthew Kahn, who had to resign because he became the chair of his department.
- Alternates for the Academic Senate (AS): Geraldine is already an alternate, but she may have to miss one meeting. Thus, another alternate member is needed. David volunteers to serve as an alternate for the AS in the fall; he may continue in the spring of 2018, but he will decide after his spring teaching schedule will become available. P.T. may take over in the spring, if David is unavailable.
- Trisha summarizes the alternates' task and purpose: they should strive to attend all the AS meetings, in order to be knowledgeable about what is going on; if a regular member cannot attend, an alternate can take his/her place for that meeting.
- Trisha also summarizes the DFC members' duties: attend all DFC meetings; if one is not a member of the AS, s/he needs to be part of one of the caucuses.

Minutes & Reports

1. Vote on May 2017 Minutes

Trisha mentions that she had sent the minutes of the previous DFC meeting to all members. She also reminds everyone that it is customary to abstain from the vote to approve meeting minutes if members were absent at the previous meeting. She submits the minutes of last meeting in May for approval. They are approved by 16 members, with one abstention.

2. AS Planning Retreat Summary

The members who attended the retreat on August 16 (Rebecca, Antonio, Dan, Geraldine, Gioia, Trisha) report of the topics discussed.

Dan: Both President Nikias and Provost Quick addressed the recent events affecting the deanship of the Keck School of Medicine. President Nikias insisted on the legal protections USC faculty enjoy, as specified in the Faculty Handbook. These protections, in his opinion, explain the challenge in investigating Dean Puliafito's actions and the administration's extreme cautiousness in the initial phase of this news becoming public.

Trisha: Provost Quick placed great emphasis on raising the teaching standards at USC, particularly on ways to reward effective teaching.

Iva asks if the discussion during the retreat provided any willingness/planning on possible interventions to support our students that are suffering because of the increasing polarization of the current political climate.

Robert wondered if his department (Psychology) could be involved in providing support to such students. This would be an attempt to address their mental health issues, in a way similar to the legal advice and assistance presently provided by the Gould School of Law.

Gioia suggests that the DFC could create a caucus to address the issue Robert addressed.

Brian asks if the AS retreat discussed ways to support our students in the classroom, especially after momentous political events, such as the recent repeal of DACA or the travel ban for Muslim students last February.

Trisha notes that, yes, this topic was discussed, but more as a set of questions/concerns, rather than strategies. Some of the questions raised were: how can faculty help students develop skills to generate "brave spaces", instead of simply "safe spaces". Manuel Pastor (one of the presenters at the AS retreat) said that while teaching his GE course he called on his students to be brave. However, his course evaluations indicated a negative response from some of his students regarding that aspect of his course. The issue of protection for controversial speech/teaching was raised and Provost Quick assured the AS that the institution would support every teacher, regardless of his or her rank.

Iva goes back to the issue of mental health for the students affected by the DACA ban, and recommends that the Psychology Dept. and the Law School Immigration Clinic get in touch with one another.

Antonio relays that in light of the recent clashes at Berkeley, President Nikias emphasized that free speech will be protected on our campus. Controversial speakers

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will be coming soon, invited by student groups, and USC is concerned that everyone be afforded the basic right to free expression. In an attempt to diffuse tension, opposing groups may be invited to hold a concurrent meeting on campus elsewhere. However, these events are meant for the USC community only—no outside participants will be admitted.

P.T. says it is important that all the symbolic actions undertaken by USC in support of DACA students, against the travel ban etc. be communicated to the university community at large.

Trisha notes that these types of actions are probably fleshed out and implemented at the “Federal” level, i.e. by the institution as a whole, rather than by the “state” (our DFC). The provost’s site has all the letters sent to the faculty, the *amicus* brief etc.

Trisha: Another topic addressed during the AS retreat was developing novel ways to evaluate teaching. Ginger Clark in the provost’s office is very much involved in this effort.

Brian suggests that one possible way to increase participation in students’ evaluation is to withhold their final grade until they submit the teacher/course evaluation.

Antonio disagrees with that approach, as such pressure might generate negative responses out of spite. In addition, a variety of evaluation tools should be included, including the teacher’s self-assessment.

Dan says that no major changes are happening this AY, thus it is crucial to involve all our colleagues and ourselves so that any changes the CET will develop regarding evaluations will include our input.

3. Update on Meeting with Dean Miller

Trisha gives an overview of the topics discussed during the meeting between Dean Miller and the DFC executive board on Aug. 24.

- There is an ongoing effort to clarify the deans’ structure. Indeed, there is a chart on the college’s website that explains it. There are three divisional deans: Humanities; Social Sciences; and Natural Sciences. In addition, the Dean of Undergraduate Education, with a focus on teaching; and the Dean of Graduate Education, tasked with building and strengthening our Masters and PhD programs.
- A relevant issue we raised was the need for faculty to know where to go in different circumstances. Dean Miller said that Renee Perez would be putting together a document with that information.
- We invited Dean Miller to our November meeting.

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- Since the Merit-Review was changed to a numeric system, Dean Miller wants us to discuss what we would like to do to further improve the process. Trisha says it is good that Dean Miller solicits our input since we have caucuses specifically devoted to different issues.

Gioia reminds everyone of the DFC resolution recommending that committee members should be elected. The 2017 UCAPT guidelines (section 7.2) and the 2013 Dornsife RTPC-track faculty guidelines (section 4) both explain that such committees are appointed by the Dean or Chair. However, this may cause conflicts of interest as well as unequal opportunities for RTPC faculty members to join committees, participate in faculty governance and fulfill service requirements.

Trisha/Dan: Yes, but Dean Miller wants the chairs to have flexibility. However, we could develop a "Best Practice" document for merit reviews, since Dean Miller seems open to receiving our input.

Trisha: On the issue of salary benchmarking, we had been asked by the provost to compare ourselves with peer institutions. However, it was difficult to gather data from private institutions. Our Faculty Affairs Caucus drafted a report last year that argued our Teaching faculty should be compared to TT faculty at Selective Liberal Arts colleges (SLACs). This report was shared with Dean Miller, who asked last year why not compare ourselves to Ivy League + R1 schools. This year Dean Miller asked why not compare ourselves to colleagues in the UC system.

Trisha: A good way for the Caucus to move forward might be to research Dean Miller's suggested peer institutions in order to establish whether their teaching-track faculty profiles are similar to ours. A good suggestion from Provost Quick was to generate a range of comparisons, highlighting similarities and differences. These would include Ivy League schools, liberal arts colleges and UC schools.

Discussion Points

1. Caucuses and Message to DFC

Trisha sent a message to former members of the caucuses to see if they were interested in continuing. She goes over the list of caucuses and their co-chairs:

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| a. Faculty Affairs | David Crombecque and Steve Mack |
| b. Research, Policies and Documentation | Gioia Polidori and Geraldine Peters |
| c. Part-Time Faculty | George Newhouse and P.T. McNiff |
| d. Curriculum | Shannon Gibson, Michael Hadjidaniel and Iva Bozovic |
| e. Elections | Antonio Idini and Carolina Sitnisky-Cole |
| f. New Outreach Caucus | (will be discussed during next DFC meeting) |

2. DFC Agenda Items for 2017-2018

Most of the following items were addressed in the previous discussion:

- a. RTPC concerns
 - i. Merit Review
 - ii. Mentoring
 - iii. Gap funding for research faculty
- b. Reconfiguring DFC voting blocs
- c. Salary benchmarking
- d. RTPC Full Professor
 - i. Eligibility
 - ii. Leadership

Trisha explains the issue of representation in the DFC. Its 18 seats were equally divided among the three divisions, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, each one with six representatives (the president does not count). After Psychology moved to Natural Sciences from Social Sciences, Nat. Sc. went up to eight members, and Soc. Sc. down to four. We will need to draft new language for the DFC bylaws in order to ensure fair representation for each faculty voting bloc.

Announcements and Action Items

Trisha: soon we will be sending a survey to all faculty, asking them to be part of our caucuses.

Next meeting will be on October 4.

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The meeting was adjourned at 5:00.

Respectfully submitted,

Antonio Idini, Secretary

The Dornsife Faculty Council